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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ON THE WORK OF
THE BUREAU OF BIOLOGICAL SURVEY

(For use in field offices)

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U. S. Department of Agriculture

PERSONNEL AND POSITIONS:

1. What qualifications are required for scientific positions in the Biological Survey, and how are the appointments made?

Although the activities of the Biological Survey are concerned primarily with wild life the various phases of the work call for diverse qualifications in its scientifically trained personnel. The investigational work pertaining to the habits, distribution, migrations, diseases, control of injurious species, etc., calls for training in biology with special reference to the subjects of ornithology and mammalogy, and general knowledge of botany, entomology, and chemistry, and in disease investigations training in veterinary science. In the acquisition of areas for migratory bird sanctuaries, men trained as civil or cadastral engineers or surveyors and transitmen, are required. All these positions with rare exception are filled from registers of eligibles maintained by the U. S. Civil Service Commission resulting from examinations as biologists (including junior, assistant, and associate grades), veterinarians (various grades), junior foresters, civil engineers, cadastral engineers, transitmen, and in exceptional cases other designations. Not many appointments are now being made to any of these positions.

2. How does the Biological Survey obtain protectors for the bird refuges?

Where full-time appointees are required to maintain areas established as Federal game preserves or bird refuges such persons are designated as U. S. reservation protectors, supervisors, or superintendents, and appointments are made from eligibles on civil-service registers. Examinations are held by the United States Civil Service Commission only as new eligibles are required. When such an examination is to be held notices are posted in post offices throughout the country and published quite generally in newspapers and periodicals. When such announcements appear, full information as to the requirements as well as the necessary application blanks can be obtained from the United States Civil Service Commission, Washington, D. C.

STUDIES OF WILD LIFE HABITS:

3. What information does the Government issue on the life habits of wild birds and animals?

The staff of the Bureau of Biological Survey, U. S. Department of Agriculture has carried on extended field studies of the life history, distribution, and breeding and other habits of the birds,

mammals, and other wild life of woods and farms. Information is given the public through bulletins, magazine articles, and correspondence.

4. Please tell me something of the Government's study of the relation of wild life to forests.

The Bureau of Biological Survey, U. S. Department of Agriculture, has made extended studies of the wild habitants of forested lands and cooperates with the Forest Service in studying the relationships of wild life to forest production and the management practices that are most favorable to the wild life and forest interests in the use of the land.

5. Does the Government have information on how I should equip myself for field studies of birds and mammals?

Suggestions have been prepared by the Biological Survey, U. S. Department of Agriculture, to help people who want to make the most of their opportunities to learn worthwhile things about the wild life of their vicinity through their own observations out of doors. These have been mimeographed and include things that can be done by individuals or groups, such as classes, 4-H Clubs, or scout troops.

6. From what Government office can I get some aluminum bands for bird-banding work?

The Bureau of Biological Survey is in charge of bird-banding work in North America. To properly qualified persons, special Federal permits are issued authorizing them to trap migratory birds in the United States for banding and release. The bands are furnished such cooperatives without charge.

7. I have found a dead bird with a band on its leg. Please tell me what it is and where it came from.

Notify the Biological Survey, U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C., stating the number on the outside, and the date and locality where the bird was found. The Survey will advise you the kind of bird, and when and where it was banded.

8. Does some Bureau of the Government furnish information about methods used in taxidermy?

The Biological Survey, of the U. S. Department of Agriculture has issued instructions for preparation of scientific specimens of birds and mammals but no complete manual on methods of taxidermy has been issued by the U. S. Department of Agriculture. The Biological Survey will advise inquirers, however, regarding helpful

literature on taxidermy and other matters relating to the care of specimens of birds and mammals.

9. What studies does the Federal Government make before fixing hunting seasons and bag limits on game birds?

The Biological Survey of the U. S. Department of Agriculture, makes extended investigations of the abundance, distribution, and migrations of waterfowl and of conditions that affect them on their breeding and wintering grounds. These provide a scientific factual basis for determining what seasons and bag limits shall be set.

ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE OF WILD LIFE:

10. Does some bureau of the Government have information for distribution on beneficial and harmful birds?

The Biological Survey of the U. S. Department of Agriculture has prepared a series of bulletins on common birds. These tell about their useful and harmful qualities and recommend methods of attracting and protecting the useful species and of discouraging those that at times are injurious. A series of bulletins on planting to attract birds and one on bird houses are available. Publications also have been prepared on winter feeding of birds. These are for sale, most of them, at 5 cents each, by the Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C.

11. How can beneficial birds and game and fur animals be encouraged to live on farms?

The Biological Survey of the U. S. Department of Agriculture has prepared a Farmers' Bulletin entitled "Improving the Farm Environment for Wild Life", which contains full directions for the management and increase of cover and food plants, directions for making a farm-game survey, and doing whatever is necessary towards the control of predatory creatures. Copies can be bought at 5 cents each from the Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C.

12. Is a permit necessary for killing migratory birds that are ruining crops?

It is illegal to kill any birds of a migratory species that are injurious to agriculture or other interests unless the Secretary of Agriculture has issued an order permitting such killing. This does not apply to any species of birds except those classed as migrants under the Migratory Bird Treaty with Great Britain. Full information may be obtained from the Bureau of Biological Survey, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

13. Is there a market for the skins, oil, and poison of rattlesnakes?

Live rattlesnakes are usually exhibited at zoological gardens, which may be addressed under that name in most of the larger cities of the country. The skins of rattlesnakes are used only in the making of curios, for which the market is quite limited. The snake skins used in making leather goods are those of large tropical species. The oil of rattlesnakes is of doubtful therapeutic value, and in any event the market for it is not large. The Biological Survey of the U. S. Department of Agriculture says that venom employed in the manufacture of antivenin, is used by only one institution in the United States, and this institution obtains its supply from living animals kept for the purpose. It can hardly be said that there is such a thing as rattlesnake farming, for rattlesnakes have rarely bred in captivity.

PROPAGATION AND IMPORTATION OF WILD SPECIES:

14. Does the Government distribute eggs of game birds?

There is a Federal statute authorizing the Secretary of Agriculture to provide breeding stocks for the restoration of depleted species, but no funds have ever been provided for this purpose and the statute has not been effective. The Department of Agriculture, therefore, has never distributed the eggs of game birds nor does it buy them. Some of the State game departments, however, have cooperated in these respects. To learn about the matter in your State, you should address that organization at the Capital.

15. Can I get breeding stock of game species from some Bureau of the Government?

The Biological Survey of the U. S. Department of Agriculture does not have available for distribution either migratory waterfowl or upland game birds for propagation. Some States have cooperative arrangements for supplying upland game birds and their eggs to individuals, information concerning which may be had by writing to the game officials of the various States. Under the provisions of Regulation 8 of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act Regulations, the Biological Survey may issue permits to individuals to take, possess, buy, sell, and transport migratory waterfowl and their eggs for propagation.

16. What branch of the Government issues permits to raise game birds in captivity?

Regulations under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act provide for the issuance of permits by the Bureau of Biological Survey, Department of Agriculture, authorizing the taking of wild ducks and wild geese at stated seasons, to form the nucleus of breeding stocks. Another form of permit issued by the same Bureau authorizes the permittee to kill and sell for food purposes the birds he raises from the wild stock. These permits are issued without cost.

17. I wish to import some birds and a pair of monkeys from South America. Is a Government permit necessary?

If the birds or animals are not of species forbidden by law to be imported into the United States, such as mongooses, flying foxes, starlings, English sparrows, the common and crested mynahs, you should apply to the Bureau of Biological Survey, Department of Agriculture, for a permit to import, correctly naming the birds or animals, and giving the numbers of each kind proposed to be imported. These permits must be presented to the collector of customs at the port of entry.

18. What branch of the Government has information on raising reindeer?

Studies of reindeer herding, feeding, and management practices and of the forage plants on which these animals feed in the Territory of Alaska, are made by the Biological Survey of the U. S. Department of Agriculture. Information on these subjects and recommendations of improved practices in herd and range management are furnished in bulletins issued from time to time as the work progresses.

FUR FARMING AND TRAPPING:

19. What is the value of the annual fur catch?

The value of the catch of fur animals in normal years is about \$65,000,000. At present it would amount to about \$20,000,000. The Biological Survey of the U. S. Department of Agriculture has no authentic statistics on the subject, as the majority of State game and fish commissions do not require annual reports on the numbers of animals trapped.

20. How extensive is the fur-farming industry, and what animals are most commonly raised?

The Biological Survey of the U. S. Department of Agriculture finds that fur animals are grown successfully in the northern half of the United States, and also in the cooler parts of California. The Bureau's data show foxes and minks first in importance in producing fur in captivity.

21. Is a permit necessary for fur farming? If so where is one obtainable?

Some of the States issue permits to fur farmers, and these may be obtained from the State game and fish commission. The Biological Survey of the U. S. Department of Agriculture does not issue such permits.

22. Where does the Government conduct experiments in fur farming?

The Biological Survey of the U. S. Department of Agriculture main-

tains two fur-animal experiment stations, one, the U. S. Fur-Animal Experiment Station, at Saratoga Springs, N. Y.; and the other, the U. S. Rabbit Experiment Station, at Fontana, Calif.

23. Can rabbits be raised profitably for fur?

The Biological Survey of the U. S. Department of Agriculture finds that it is not profitable to raise rabbits for fur alone, but that these animals must be produced for both meat and fur to make the business profitable.

24. Is fur produced in pens inferior to that taken in the wild?

No. The Biological Survey of the U. S. Department of Agriculture has found that silver and cross foxes produced in captivity have brought even higher prices than those taken in the wild. Selective matings for improvement in color and density of fur can be made under the controlled conditions possible on fur farms.

WILD-LIFE DISEASE INVESTIGATIONS:

25. Do specialists of the Government find that wild species are more healthy and free from disease than domestic stock?

The Biological Survey of the U. S. Department of Agriculture has found that wild subjects are free from disease only in so far as isolation does not expose them to infection. When they become over abundant in the wild, and an infectious condition makes its appearance, wild birds and animals show a high incidence of susceptibility to disease. Similar consequences occur on game and fur farms, where animals are raised under controlled conditions, and also wherever many individuals are maintained on limited areas.

26. Does the disease tularemia, known also as "rabbit fever", attack domestic rabbits?

Tularemia, according to the Biological Survey of the U. S. Department of Agriculture, is an infectious disease and may attack a great variety of birds and animals, including man, and is not properly spoken of as rabbit fever. Though infectious to domestic rabbits, the manner in which these animals are usually housed in commercial rabbitries does not expose them to sources of infection.

27. Is it known what causes the periodic disappearance of game over extensive districts?

Various biotic factors doubtless have an influence on the abundance and scarcity of wild life, but investigational work conducted by the Biological Survey of the Department of Agriculture strongly indicates

that disease, principally tularemia, plays an important role in the sudden disappearance of certain species. It is noted that in these more or less regular cyclic changes from abundance to scarcity, the severe losses occur when the population of susceptible subjects ranges close together. Under such conditions a virulent disease has ample opportunity for rapid spread. Examination of many specimens by the Biological Survey shows a high percentage of diseased specimens in the periods of decline.

28. What effect does oil pollution of streams, lakes, and other waters have on ducks and other waterfowl?

Biologists of the U. S. Department of Agriculture say that oil on the water causes the feathers of waterfowl to adhere to each other and become matted, and in this condition they allow water to reach the skin. Because of the matted plumage the birds are also unable to fly or to dive in search of food. They then not only starve, but many die from exposure of their bodies to the water and the incidental chilling.

29. On the shores of many lakes in the Western states wild ducks are frequently found dead in great numbers. Is the Government doing anything about it?

A great many waterfowl and shorebirds die in the alkaline lakes in the western part of this country and Canada as a result of botulism. This is a disease caused by eating food contaminated with the toxic products of certain bacteria that grow in profusion under suitable environment, such as is frequently found in shallow, alkali lakes. The Biological Survey of the U. S. Department of Agriculture, has carried out extensive investigations on this subject and will supply correspondents information in greater detail.

CONTROL OF HARMFUL WILD ANIMALS:

30. How can I get rid of moles in my lawn, and does the Government have bulletins on the subject?

The best way to get rid of moles is by trapping. The Bureau of Biological Survey has prepared a bulletin on the control of moles, published by the U. S. Department of Agriculture, Farmers Bulletin No. 1716. Copies may be obtained at 5 cents each by writing to the Superintendent of Documents, Washington, D. C.

31. How can I get information on the control of injurious rodents?

Publications on the control of some of these animals may be obtained at 5 cents a copy from the Superintendent of Documents, Washington, D. C. More detailed information on specific cases may be obtained from the Biological Survey's leader of rodent control in

your State, or by writing to the Bureau of Biological Survey, Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C.

32. Does the Government assist stockmen to control coyotes and other predators near public domain?

Publications on the control of coyotes, wolves, mountain lions, and bobcats, may be obtained from the Superintendent of Documents, Washington, D. C. at 5 cents a copy. You may also get in touch with the Bureau of Biological Survey's leader of cooperative predatory-animal control in your State, and it may be that he can give you some assistance in your problem.

33. How can we get rid of a bat roost in our attic?

Bats frequently may be driven from attics or double walls by the use of naphthalene, obtainable from drug stores in either the flakes or common "moth ball" form. The Bureau of Biological Survey of the U. S. Department of Agriculture says that 2 to 5 pounds will usually drive them out, after which the entrances should be plugged or covered with tin. Further information may be obtained from either the field offices or the Washington Headquarters of the Biological Survey.

WILD-LIFE REFUGES:

34. How are the bird refuges and game preserves of the Biological Survey established?

The wild-life refuges and preserves administered by the Biological Survey are established through the withdrawal of public lands by Executive order; by Act of Congress designating certain public lands or authorizing the purchase of privately owned lands for such purpose; or under the provisions of the Migratory Bird Conservation Act of February 18, 1929, which authorizes a 10-year program of acquisition by purchase, gift, or lease of lands or waters suitable for migratory bird refuges. Funds for carrying out the program are appropriated by Congress, and under an Act approved March 16, 1934, these will be augmented by the sale of "migratory-bird hunting stamps". These are to be available at designated post-offices at \$1 each.

35. How many wild-life refuges are administered by the Biological Survey?

One hundred and three bird and mammal refuges and preserves are administered by this Bureau, mainly in continental United States, though some are in Alaska, Hawaii, and Puerto Rico. Six were established primarily as big-game preserves (including the Elk

Refuge in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, a winter feeding ground), one was reserved primarily for experiments in crossing reindeer and caribou, and one is a refuge for muskrats and beavers. The others are for birds, as well as the big-game preserves in the United States, which also have been designated as bird refuges.

36. Are big-game animals disposed of by the Biological Survey, and if so, how can one be obtained?

In order to prevent overgrazing of the ranges on the big-game preserves, administered by the Biological Survey of the U. S. Department of Agriculture, certain numbers of buffalo and elk, and sometimes a few mule deer, are disposed of annually. Bids on the animals are called for, and animals not sold under bid are disposed of at prices established by the bids accepted. Under cooperative agreement, surplus animals are furnished to State game preserves, municipal parks, and zoos; and one buffalo may be donated to any State, county, or municipal preserve, park, or zoo for exhibition or breeding purposes, the expenses of capture, crating, and delivery to be borne by the receiving agency.

37. We are interested in establishing a Federal migratory-bird refuge in the northern part of our State. How large should areas be for the purpose?

Proposals will be received by the Biological Survey of the U. S. Department of Agriculture for small as well as large tracts within any units designated for purchase, but only those lands that are desirable for wild-life purposes will be considered for acquisition. Good policy dictates that representative and valuable refuges should normally comprise 20,000 to 50,000 acres. Such units will make for complete isolation, will offer varieties of attractions to most if not all species of migratory birds, and will lend themselves to more nearly ideal administrative arrangements than would smaller areas. In arid parts of the West, however, and under exceptional conditions elsewhere, less extensive sites must be taken in the absence of areas meeting the standard established.

38. On what terms does the Government lease lands for game-bird refuges?

With rare exceptions, it is the policy of the Biological Survey of the U. S. Department of Agriculture, to use its authority to lease lands for migratory bird refuges only when the owner will at the same time agree to sell them within a stipulated period. This policy of leasing with purchase option is followed because leases can be entered into for only one year at a time, although they might be renewed from year to year if the annual appropriations permitted. In addition, there is always the danger that, after the property is removed from the jurisdiction of the United States by the expiration of the lease, the good accomplished by the Federal

government might be undone.

39. We have an area in our neighborhood containing about 20,000 acres frequented by many forms of migratory birds, small game, and fur animals, and would like to propose it as a Federal refuge. Will you please tell me how to do this?

The limited information in your letter makes it desirable to advise that under the provisions of the Migratory Bird Conservation Act, which authorizes the acquisition of migratory-bird refuges, there is a provision that limits such refuge acquisitions to areas necessary for the conservation of migratory game birds. By reason of this limitation, such areas as are acquired must be of outstanding attractiveness to migratory birds, or must be of such character that they can be made attractive to them. In other words, while other species of wild life are deserving of consideration, they are secondary to migratory birds in making such selection.

40. I own a small area of marshland (about 2,000 acres) over which hunters shoot ducks every fall. Would the Government want this in its system of bird refuges?

Concentration areas for migratory waterfowl that contain as little as 2,000 acres are not now considered for Federal migratory-bird refuges, one reason being that the cost of administration by the Federal Government would be inordinately large. The Biological Survey of the U. S. Department of Agriculture recommends that such areas be considered as State projects, for generally more satisfactory results on smaller areas will accrue through their administration by the State.

LEGAL PROTECTION OF BIRDS:

41. How are Federal game laws enforced? What bureau of the Government is responsible?

Federal game laws are administered by the Bureau of Biological Survey of the U. S. Department of Agriculture through a force of United States game protectors and United States deputy game wardens. The game protectors are full time employees appointed from eligible lists resulting from rigid civil-service examinations. The deputy wardens are cooperative employees - usually State game officers - who serve without pay except when actually performing duty.

42. What department of the Federal Government enforces game laws in Alaska?

The Alaska Game Law and the regulations thereunder are administered by the Alaska Game Commission, consisting of five members, all residents of Alaska. Four of these members are appointed by the Secretary of Agriculture, one from each of the four judicial

divisions of the Territory; the fifth member, who is the executive officer and fiscal agent of the Commission, is the chief representative of the Bureau of Biological Survey resident in Alaska. Under the Commission he directs the administration of the game laws and regulations.

43. Does any department of the Federal Government issue hunting and fishing licenses to veterans, enabling them to hunt and fish in any State they wish? Please give me all available information.

Hunting and fishing licenses are not issued by the Federal Government. They are issued under the provisions of State laws, each State having different laws on the subject. Several of the States do make an exception in the case of certain classes of veterans, but there is no Federal license granting the right to veterans to hunt or fish wherever they wish. A summary of the game laws is prepared each year by the Biological Survey and issued by the Department of Agriculture.

44. Is it legal to shoot flickers, or yellowhammers, anywhere in the United States? What bureau should I write to for information?

Flickers belong to the woodpecker family, all of which are protected at all times, under a Federal statute, which is administered by the Bureau of Biological Survey, of the Department of Agriculture. This law is known as the Federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act, and it operates to protect many species of migratory birds, both game and non-game.

45. What information does the Government supply on duck shooting, and to what department should I write concerning bag limits and hunting seasons?

The Bureau of Biological Survey, of the U. S. Department of Agriculture, furnishes information concerning shooting restrictions in the various states, but since this Bureau has jurisdiction only over migratory species of game, information as to the shooting of upland game should be obtained from the various State conservation commissions. The Biological Survey administers the Federal regulations fixing open seasons and bag limits on migratory game birds and every year publishes a bulletin on the game laws, which may be purchased at 5 cents a copy from the Superintendent of Documents, Washington, D. C.

